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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

County Archives of the State of Illinois (Illinois State Historical Library, *Collections*, vol. 12, *Bibliographical Series*, vol. 3).
By THEODORE CALVIN PEASE, University of Illinois. (Springfield, Illinois State Historical Library, 1915. cxli, 730 p.)

The liberal appropriations for research and publication made by the state of Illinois to its historical library are fully justified by the appearance of this valuable inventory of the public records in its county courthouses. Other states have in recent years recognized the importance of such records by providing for commissioners to supervise their making and preservation, but Illinois alone has had the foresight to institute a comprehensive survey of the situation and to make the results of that survey available by publication. The amount of labor involved in such an enterprise is by no means inconsiderable, as can be seen from the fact that the work has been under way in Illinois since 1911. The expenditure of so much money and labor will never be regretted, however, for there is now available in print for the use not only of historical students but of all who are concerned with public records—and who is not?—a detailed descriptive statement of just what records are to be found in each of the county depositories.

While the bulk of the volume is of interest only to the people of Illinois, the introduction of one hundred and forty pages has a wide application. It is the only comprehensive study that has ever been made of American local records and sets forth clearly the character and content of such records, their historical value, and the necessity for revision and supervision of the methods by which they are made and cared for. The development of each recording office and of each class of records is traced from the beginning with constant reference to the controlling statutes. The frequency with which the laws of the state have been ignored or set at naught by the officials is surprising, but still more startling are the conclusions as to the safety of the existing records. Despite the fact that practically all the records of several counties have been destroyed by fire, entailing great incon-

venience and financial loss to the community, as well as making impossible an adequate knowledge of its history, nearly half of the counties of the state are still without fireproof courthouses. Some counties have the more important records in supposedly fireproof vaults, but it is asserted that "in nearly one-fifth of the counties of Illinois, the records are in immediate danger of wholesale destruction by fire." Nor is fire the only source of danger, for there are numerous instances of the wanton destruction of records by officials ignorant of their value. It is greatly to be hoped that the publication of this volume will arouse in officials and in the general public a greater sense of responsibility in archive matters, and that the excellent recommendations set forth will be made effective by legislation.

In the body of the book the counties are taken up in alphabetical order, with the exception of Cook which is treated first. In each case an introductory note describes the courthouse and indicates the provisions for the care of the archives. Then follow itemized inventories, classified usually under such headings as county commissioners' and supervisors' records, county court records, taxation records, records of vital statistics, probate court records, records of wills, bonds, and letters, circuit court records, and recorders' records. For each item inclusive dates and the number of volumes or filing boxes are given, and generally the present location of the material is indicated. Too often serious gaps in the records are disclosed.

The successful completion of this monumental work ought to stimulate other states to undertake a similar survey of their county archives. That the local records of Illinois have not been and are not being properly cared for is now definitely established. Is there any good reason for thinking that the situation is much better in the other states of the Northwest?

S. J. B.

Pioneer Laymen of North America. By the REV. T. J. CAMPBELL, S. J. Volume 1. (New York, The America Press, 1915. xvii, 287 p.)

This is the first of two volumes designed as companion books to the author's *Pioneer Priests of North America* (New York, 1908-11. 3 v.). It contains "condensed and somewhat rapid